

Assembly Bill No. 2188

CHAPTER 378

An act to amend Sections 2708 and 3075 of the Unemployment Insurance Code, relating to unemployment insurance, and declaring the urgency thereof, to take effect immediately.

[Approved by Governor September 25, 2010. Filed with
Secretary of State September 27, 2010.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AB 2188, Bradford. Unemployment compensation: disability benefits.

Existing law authorizes the Employment Development Department to administer the disability compensation program. Existing law requires the department, among other duties, to make disability benefit payments by checks drawn on a specified bank, as provided.

The bill would remove the requirement to pay by check and thus allow the director to make these payments using electronic technology.

Existing law requires a claim for disability benefits to be supported by a certification of a treating physician or practitioner, and defines a practitioner as a person duly licensed or certified in California acting within the scope of his or her license or certification who is a dentist, podiatrist, or as to normal pregnancy or childbirth, a midwife, nurse midwife, or a nurse practitioner.

This bill would modify the definition of practitioner, as prescribed.

This bill would declare that it is to take effect immediately as an urgency statute.

The people of the State of California do enact as follows:

SECTION 1. Section 2708 of the Unemployment Insurance Code is amended to read:

2708. (a) (1) In accordance with the director's authorized regulations, and except as provided in subdivision (c) and Sections 2708.1 and 2709, a claimant shall establish medical eligibility for each uninterrupted period of disability by filing a first claim for disability benefits supported by the certificate of a treating physician or practitioner that establishes the sickness, injury, or pregnancy of the employee, or the condition of the family member that warrants the care of the employee. For subsequent periods of uninterrupted disability after the period covered by the initial certificate or any preceding continued claim, a claimant shall file a continued claim for those benefits supported by the certificate of a treating physician or practitioner. A certificate filed to establish medical eligibility for the

employee's own sickness, injury, or pregnancy shall contain a diagnosis and diagnostic code prescribed in the International Classification of Diseases, or, where no diagnosis has yet been obtained, a detailed statement of symptoms.

(2) A certificate filed to establish medical eligibility of the employee's own sickness, injury, or pregnancy shall also contain a statement of medical facts including secondary diagnoses when applicable, within the physician's or practitioner's knowledge, based on a physical examination and a documented medical history of the claimant by the physician or practitioner, indicating the physician's or practitioner's conclusion as to the claimant's disability, and a statement of the physician's or practitioner's opinion as to the expected duration of the disability.

(b) An employee shall be required to file a certificate to establish eligibility when taking leave to care for a family member with a serious health condition. The certificate shall be developed by the department. In order to establish medical eligibility of the serious health condition of the family member that warrants the care of the employee, the information shall be within the physician's or practitioner's knowledge and shall be based on a physical examination and documented medical history of the family member and shall contain all of the following:

(1) A diagnosis and diagnostic code prescribed in the International Classification of Diseases, or, where no diagnosis has yet been obtained, a detailed statement of symptoms.

(2) The date, if known, on which the condition commenced.

(3) The probable duration of the condition.

(4) An estimate of the amount of time that the physician or practitioner believes the employee is needed to care for the child, parent, spouse, or domestic partner.

(5) (A) A statement that the serious health condition warrants the participation of the employee to provide care for his or her child, parent, spouse, or domestic partner.

(B) "Warrants the participation of the employee" includes, but is not limited to, providing psychological comfort, and arranging "third party" care for the child, parent, spouse, or domestic partner, as well as directly providing, or participating in, the medical care.

(c) The department shall develop a certification form for bonding that is separate and distinct from the certificate required in subdivision (a) for an employee taking leave to bond with a minor child within the first year of the child's birth or placement in connection with foster care or adoption.

(d) The first and any continuing claim of an individual who obtains care and treatment outside this state shall be supported by a certificate of a treating physician or practitioner duly licensed or certified by the state or foreign country in which the claimant is receiving the care and treatment. If a physician or practitioner licensed by and practicing in a foreign country is under investigation by the department for filing false claims and the department does not have legal remedies to conduct a criminal investigation or prosecution in that country, the department may suspend the processing

of all further certifications until the physician or practitioner fully cooperates, and continues to cooperate with the investigation. A physician or practitioner licensed by and practicing in a foreign country who has been convicted of filing false claims with the department may not file a certificate in support of a claim for disability benefits for a period of five years.

(e) For purposes of this part:

(1) “Physician” has the same meaning as defined in Section 3209.3 of the Labor Code.

(2) “Practitioner” means a person duly licensed or certified in California acting within the scope of his or her license or certification who is a dentist, podiatrist, or a nurse practitioner, and in the case of a nurse practitioner, after performance of a physical examination by a nurse practitioner and collaboration with a physician and surgeon, or as to normal pregnancy or childbirth, a midwife or nurse midwife, or nurse practitioner.

(f) For a claimant who is hospitalized in or under the authority of a county hospital in this state, a certificate of initial and continuing medical disability, if any, shall satisfy the requirements of this section if the disability is shown by the claimant’s hospital chart, and the certificate is signed by the hospital’s registrar. For a claimant hospitalized in or under the care of a medical facility of the United States government, a certificate of initial and continuing medical disability, if any, shall satisfy the requirements of this section if the disability is shown by the claimant’s hospital chart, and the certificate is signed by a medical officer of the facility duly authorized to do so.

(g) Nothing in this section shall be construed to preclude the department from requesting additional medical evidence to supplement the first or any continued claim if the additional evidence can be procured without additional cost to the claimant. The department may require that the additional evidence include any or all of the following:

(1) Identification of diagnoses.

(2) Identification of symptoms.

(3) A statement setting forth the facts of the claimant’s disability. The statement shall be completed by any of the following individuals:

(A) The physician or practitioner treating the claimant.

(B) The registrar, authorized medical officer, or other duly authorized official of the hospital or health facility treating the claimant.

(C) An examining physician or other representative of the department.

SEC. 2. Section 3075 of the Unemployment Insurance Code is amended to read:

3075. The director shall, without presenting vouchers and itemized statements, withdraw from the Disability Fund any sums that he or she deems necessary for the payment of disability benefits for a reasonable future period. The Controller shall draw his or her warrant for any claim presented by the director for the payment and the Treasurer shall pay the warrant. Upon the withdrawal thereof, those sums shall be deposited in a disability benefit payment account in such bank or public depository and under those conditions as the director determines, with the approval of the Department of Finance. The bank or public depository shall be one in which

general funds of the state may be deposited, but no public deposit insurance charge or premium shall be paid out of that account. Money in this account shall be used solely to pay disability benefits by the department pursuant to authorized regulations and no other disbursement shall be made from that account, except that amounts erroneously and illegally deposited in that account may be refunded. The procedure prescribed by those regulations shall satisfy and be in lieu of any and all statutory requirements of specific appropriation or other form of release by state officers of money in their custody prior to expenditure that might otherwise be applicable to withdrawals from that account.

SEC. 3. This act is an urgency statute necessary for the immediate preservation of the public peace, health, or safety within the meaning of Article IV of the Constitution and shall go into immediate effect. The facts constituting the necessity are:

In order to ensure that claimants obtain disability benefits in a timely manner, it is necessary that this act take effect immediately.